ALMINE RECH

'Uncombed, Unforeseen, Unconstrained' Collateral Event of the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Apr 23 — Nov 27, 2022 | Conservatorio di Musica Benedetto Marcello

In this installation conceived for the chapel of the Palazzo of the Conservatory of Music in Venice for the Collateral Event *Uncombed, Unforeseen, Unconstrained*, organized by Parasol Unit at the Biennale Arte 2022, Oliver Beer builds on his exhibition with the Metropolitan Museum of Art to reveal the innate musicality of the material world. He has brought together a playful collection of vessels and hollow objects characterised by their animistic qualities. Arranged on plinths, each object represents or takes the form of an animal or human character. Beer has placed a tiny microphone within each of the vessels. The microphones are individually activated by the keys on a midi keyboard (the keyboard itself makes no sound). When a key is pressed the ambient sound inside the corresponding vessel is amplified and creates acoustic feedback at the exact note of the vessel. In this way we can hear the resonance of the vessels live, in real-time, and they can be played like an organ. The installation will be activated at the opening by Oliver Beer himself and the musicians of the Conservatorio for a 24h performance.

Beer says of the piece: “Like a seashell or a wine glass, every empty vessel has its own musical note at which it resonates. Physical form and musical harmony are inseparable - it’s impossible to make a vessel or a hollow object without creating a musical note; and this has been true throughout the history of object-making. Some of these vessels in this installation have been singing the same note for hundreds of years. The note of a vessel is determined by the shape and size of the empty space inside it. I chose the 32 vessels for their animistic qualities as well as for their specific natural resonant frequencies: they resonate chromatically over two and a half octaves between the notes D2 and A4. During the course of the exhibition, visitors to the exhibition will be able to play and perform on the installation; and for me part of the excitement in this piece will be the friction between these ancient and universal sounds and the diverse music that comes out of them as they are activated by the most contemporary musicians”.

In the exquisite chapel hidden at the heart of the Conservatorio and surrounded by musicians, the hope is that this installation will have a rich musical life throughout the six months of the Biennale Arte 2022 before moving on to allow these diverse objects to make new music in new contexts.

— Oliver Beer, Little Gods (Chamber Organ), 2022